

# Office of Grants Appeals

## New Jersey Quality Single Accountability Continuum (NJQSAC)

### Regional Field-Test Training Sessions Questions and Answers



November 2004

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

Equivalency Application/Exemption from Quality Assurance Annual Report (QAAR)	1
Submission Due Dates	1
NJQSAC School District Effectiveness Scoring and Placement on Performance Continuum	3
Required Signatures	6
NJQSAC District Effectiveness Checklist Indicators and Standards	6
Alignment with other Department Requirements	7
Submission of Required Documents (NJQSAC District Effectiveness Checklist, Statement of Assurance and report of findings)	8
State-operated Districts	10
Seven-year Certification	10
Intervention (Technical/Targeted Assistance – Highly Skilled Professional (HSP))	11
NJQSAC District Improvement Plan	12

# New Jersey Quality Single Accountability Continuum (NJQSAC)

## Questions and Answers

**Introduction:** Approximately 18 districts volunteered to participate in the NJQSAC field-test. Three regionally based sessions were held: September 29 in the southern region; October 5 in the northern region; and October 12 in the central region. Following are the questions and responses generated.

### Equivalency Application/Exemption from Quality Assurance Annual Report (QAAR)

**Q1:** Are school districts participating in the NJQSAC field-test required to complete the Quality Assurance Annual Report (QAAR)?

**A:** No. Districts participating in the NJQSAC field-test should file an NJQSAC equivalency application with their respective county offices of education in order to obtain exemption from the QAAR process. Districts also have the option to complete both the QAAR and the NJQSAC School District Effectiveness Checklist.

### Submission due dates

**Q2:** How were the due dates for submission of the NJQSAC School District Effectiveness Checklist, Statement of Assurance and annual report of findings determined?

**A:** The due dates were determined primarily through consensus by the New Jersey Department of Education (NJDOE) Senior Staff with input from the members of the various NJQSAC Implementation Work Groups, which consisted of local school district administrators, local school board members, and NJDOE personnel.

**Q3:** Should other plans (e.g., comprehensive equity plan, district technology plan, emergency and crisis management plan, Non-Abbott Early Childhood Aid Plan, etc.) required by the state be submitted to the department or should they be submitted in accordance with NJQSAC?

- A: All plans required by the department are to be submitted according to their respective timelines. NJDOE will be working to consolidate as many plans as feasible.
- Q4: Are local boards of education required to approve the NJQSAC District Effectiveness Checklist before it is submitted to the county superintendent?
- A: Yes. For the purposes of the field-test, the submission dates for the completion and approval of the NJQSAC District Effectiveness Checklist will be flexible. Districts should communicate all concerns to the county superintendent and have the NJQSAC District Effectiveness Checklist completed by November 30, 2004.
- Q5: In the NJQSAC Statement of Assurances, the introductory paragraph states that the assurance must be presented and accepted by the local board of education prior to October 31; however, the next sentence states that the assurance must be submitted by August 15. Are these dates correct?
- A: These dates will be reviewed and clarification will be issued in the *NJQSAC Procedures Review Manual*. Field-test districts should submit the Statement of Assurances in conjunction with the NJQSAC District Effectiveness Checklist.
- Q6: Are the due dates for the submission of other reports required by the department aligned with the NJQSAC due dates?
- A: Not in all cases. Some reports must meet federal or state requirements, and these dates are established accordingly.
- Q7: What data should field-test sites use when completing the NJQSAC School District Effectiveness Checklist?
- A: In all instances, the most current data should be used. Districts are to document the data used and the dates of collection in the report of findings.
- Q8: Will the department consider changing the due dates for submission on the NJQSAC School District Effectiveness Checklist in general?

A: The NJDOE recognizes that it will be difficult to adhere to the due dates because of district fiscal auditing timelines. In addition, because the fiscal component is directly tied to instructional efforts, using audits from the previous year will not necessarily support any changes that were made for the year in which the NJQSAC School District Effectiveness Checklist is completed. Therefore, the department will consider changing the due dates after the field-test and pilot program are completed and feedback from the participating school districts, county offices of education and regional offices is reviewed.

### NJQSAC School District Effectiveness Scoring and Placement on Performance Continuum

Q9: When scoring the Federal/State-Required Quality Indicators on the NJQSAC School District Effectiveness Checklist, does answering “no” for any one of the standards mean the indicator receives a “0” point value?

A: Yes. The Federal/State-Required Quality Indicators are all federally or state mandated. The scoring for each is based on an “all” or “nothing” configuration. If a school district misses one standard within a specific indicator, the entire score for the indicator is “0”.

Q10: How is the NJQSAC School District Effectiveness Checklist score calculated when “NA” is checked for a standard or indicator?

A: If the “NA” item pertains to a standard within the Federal/State-Required Quality Indicators, the item is not factored into the scoring. If the “NA” item pertains to a standard within the Supporting Quality Indicators, the average is calculated based on the total number of items with “yes” or “no” responses.

Q11: What is the purpose of the cut scores for the Federal/State-Required Quality Indicators?

A: Based on scoring scenarios excluding cut scores, a district was able to receive the designation of moderate performance despite missing four out of five Federal/State-Required Quality Indicators, which represent federal and state mandates. The inclusion of cut scores reinforces the importance of compliance with federal and state mandates for placement on the performance continuum.

Q12: What are the cut scores for Federal/State-Required Quality Indicators?

A: High Performance: 76  
Moderate Performance: 48  
Low Performance: 28 (Partial Intervention)  
27 (Full Intervention)

Q13: Is a school district's designation on the performance continuum based solely on the Federal/State-Required Quality Indicators?

A: No, the designation is based on the combined score resulting from the total of the Federal/State-Required Quality Indicators, the Supporting Quality Indicators and the cut score.

Q14: With regard to scoring the Supporting Quality Indicators, what score is assigned when the calculation of the average does not equal a whole number?

A: If the average is  $\geq .5$ , the number would be rounded up, and if the average is  $< .5$ , the number would be rounded down.

Q15: Is the field-test going to eliminate Level II districts?

A: The field-test will eliminate the designation of Levels I, II and III in districts participating in the field-test. It is the intent of the department that the field-test participants will assist us in putting the finishing touches on a system that will be both user-friendly and accurate in assessing the performance of both exemplary districts and those in need of assistance.

Q16: What will be the status of Level I, Level II, and Level III districts after the NJQSAC legislation becomes law?

A: Once the legislation becomes law, all districts will be required to annually complete the NJQSAC School District Effectiveness Checklist, and the district's score will determine its placement on the performance continuum (the combination of the total score and the cut score from the checklist).

**Q17: Has a benchmark pertaining to a certain number of missed indicators been established as a trigger to provide a district with intervention?**

A: No. A benchmark has not been established at this time as an indicator for intervention. With input from the field-test districts, establishing such a trigger can be discussed.

**Q18: What happens when discrepancies in scoring occur?**

A: If any discrepancies occur, the county superintendent and designees may contact the district for clarification, require documentation to substantiate the district's scoring, or schedule a site visit.

**Q19: Can a waiver or an extension be granted if the district's designation on the performance continuum changes as a result of using the most current testing data?**

A: A decision would be made on a case-by-case basis.

**Q20: Can a district that has not made Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP) be designated as a high performance district?**

A: This would depend on the overall score a district receives as a result of completing the NJQSAC School District Effectiveness Checklist.

**Q21: What if you have mixed AYP results where the middle school or one subgroup did not make AYP?**

A: District AYP is determined by all elementary, middle and high schools meeting AYP indicators for two consecutive years in the same content area. If the middle school or one subgroup did not make AYP, the district would not receive any points for that indicator on the NJQSAC District Effectiveness Checklist.

## Required Signatures

Q22: On page A-12, the signatory page of the NJQSAC School District Effectiveness Checklist, one of the signatures required is the “County Business Administrator.” Is this correct?

A: No, it should read, “School Business Administrator/Board Secretary.”

Q23: On page 16 of the NJQSAC Procedures Review Manual, Part I under VI.A., it states: “Upon completion of the School District Effectiveness Checklist and Statement of Assurance, the local board of education shall provide approval of each document prior to its being submitted to the Department of Education for review.” Which specific documents are to be approved by the local board of education and submitted per this requirement?

A: The NJQSAC School District Effectiveness Checklist and the Statement of Assurances need to be approved by the board. Language in the NJQSAC Procedures Review Manual will be revised to read as follows: “...the local board of education shall provide approval of these two documents prior to their submission...”

## NJQSAC District Effectiveness Checklist Indicators and Standards

Q24: How can districts meet the functional capacity requirement in IV.A.iii.? There is no guidance in the NJQSAC Procedures Review Manual.

A: Functional capacity is defined in *N.J.A.C.* 6A:26. Districts are required to adhere to the provisions outlined in the regulations. For the purposes of the field-test, volunteer districts are required to score themselves in accordance with the definition and requirements as related to the district’s Long-Range Facility Plan. Because this standard is a state-required quality indicator, if schools do not meet the standard, schools will receive a score of “0” for the indicator. Field-test districts are encouraged to note any problems encountered during the field-test process, including general issues and those specific to indicators and standards in the NJQSAC District Effectiveness Checklist. All federal and state quality



indicators, as well as supporting indicators that pose an overwhelming problem for school districts during the field-test, will be reviewed by the department. Furthermore, additional guidance will be provided during the field-test, and the *NJQSAC Procedures Review Manual* will be amended to reflect changes, as needed.

### Alignment with Other Department Requirements

**Q25: Is the Abbott Three-Year Operational Plan one of the plans that will be incorporated into NJQSAC?**

**A:** At the present time, the Abbott Three-Year Operational Plan is separate, but the goal of the department is to incorporate all district plans into one comprehensive plan.

**Q26: Will NJQSAC cause the special education monitoring system to change?**

**A:** No. The special education monitoring system will remain the same, but the information and findings will be used to support NJQSAC findings. Special Education monitoring is federally mandated to occur every six years and will continue as such.

**Q27: Is the charter school monitoring system still going to exist?**

**A:** Yes. The charter school monitoring system is state-mandated and will remain the same. The department intends to establish ways to align the two monitoring systems.

**Q28: How will Education Service Commissions, charter schools, and jointures be folded into NJQSAC?**

**A:** Feedback will be needed during the field-test to assist with determining the best way to incorporate the requirements of these programs into NJQSAC.

**Q29: Will NJQSAC change the status of districts participating in Collaborative Assessment for Planning and Achievement (CAPA)?**

A: There will not be any change in the designation of districts identified as low-performing Abbott schools and Title I schools identified for "corrective action" as defined under the *No Child Left Behind Act of 2001*.

Q30: What is the difference between CAPA and NJQSAC?

A: CAPA is a diagnostic tool that focuses on the school level. NJQSAC focuses on school district effectiveness. CAPA is used in low-performing Abbott schools and Title I schools identified for "corrective action" as defined under the *No Child Left Behind Act of 2001*. NJQSAC pertains to all districts excluding charter schools and Education Service Commissions. NJQSAC has five key components of school district effectiveness, and CAPA focuses on program and instruction.

Submission of Required Documents (NJQSAC District Effectiveness Checklist, Statement of Assurances and report of findings)

Q31: NJQSAC field-test trainers discussed the issue of district collaboration with the county superintendents before submitting the District Effectiveness Checklist. Has anyone estimated the amount of time it may take to collaborate?

A: No. Any estimation relative to the amount of time it will take to collaborate with county offices of education, completing the NJQSAC District Effectiveness Checklist and other NJQSAC-required documentation, will occur during the field-test process.

Q32: Will the department share the approved annual report with the district?

A: Yes. When the county superintendent completes the annual report, a draft of the report will be shared with the district.

Q33: Will the county superintendent receive a template for the annual report?

A: Yes. With the assistance from the county offices of education, the department will develop a template of the annual report.

Q34: How often is the NJQSAC School District Effectiveness Checklist completed?

A: The checklist is completed annually.

**Q35: Who should complete the NJQSAC School District Effectiveness Checklist?**

A: The checklist should be used as a self-study and completed in collaboration with a team to include the superintendent, parents, staff, local board of education, etc.

**Q36: What happens if the local board of education does not meet until after the NJQSAC School District Effectiveness Checklist, Statement of Assurances and annual report of findings is due to the county superintendent?**

A: The required documents must be submitted; however, the submission will not become final until after the board resolution is provided.

**Q37: Once the NJQSAC School District Effectiveness Checklist is completed and sent to the county superintendent's office annually, will the district be informed as to what documents, if any, are required for the on-site review?**

A: Yes. Districts will be informed of the documentation that is to be made available to the county superintendent.

**Q38: Is there any State Board of Education action on NJQSAC?**

A: Yes. At the completion of the NJQSAC annual self-assessment, the State Board of Education will be informed. Every seven years, the State Board will determine the certification status of all districts.

**Q39: Since the Department of Education staff will have oversight of the process, is it correct that the NJDOE staff should not be included on the list of participants who assisted in the completion of the NJQSAC School District Effectiveness Checklist?**

A: Yes, however, county offices of education may provide assistance but are not part of the district evaluation team.

Q40: The first item on the Statement of Assurances reads, “In analyzing student performance for each grade assessed by the State for the total population, each school met the State standard for each content area.” If the district is not in compliance, can the Statement of Assurance be completed?

A: Yes. The Statement of Assurance must be completed using the “C” indicating compliance or “N” indicating noncompliance.

### State-operated Districts

Q41: What are the implications for state-operated districts? Will the department convene a separate meeting to discuss NJQSAC with the state-operated school districts?

A: There are numerous implications for state-operated districts. State-operated districts should discuss all concerns and questions with their county superintendents.

Q42: Is the state take-over law being rescinded?

A: No. The state take-over legislation is being amended, not rescinded. Legislation has been introduced in the Assembly and Senate which can be viewed at [http://www.njleg.state.nj.us/2004/Bills/S1500/1431\\_I1.HTM](http://www.njleg.state.nj.us/2004/Bills/S1500/1431_I1.HTM) or [http://www.njleg.state.nj.us/2004/Bills/A3000/2643\\_I1.HTM](http://www.njleg.state.nj.us/2004/Bills/A3000/2643_I1.HTM).

### Seven-year Certification

Q43: What will occur if a high-performance district has been certified, and in the next year, it is designated as moderate or low-performance?

A: Per Part I of the NJQSAC Procedures Review Manual, page 28, if the findings resulting from the annual review indicate that the district has decreased in overall compliance by a 50 percent reduction in checklist score, the district’s certification will be reevaluated and a compliance investigation will occur to determine causal factors.

Q44: How long should the seven-year on-site monitoring process take?

A: The on-site monitoring process may vary from 1-10 days.

### Intervention (Technical/Targeted Assistance – HSP)

Q45: Who will provide targeted assistance to the district?

A: The department will provide targeted assistance to districts designated as moderate performance.

Q46: When is a Highly Skilled Professional (HSP) assigned to a school district?

A: HSPs are assigned to school districts after a school district is designated as low-performance and the school district's critical areas of need are identified.

Q47: What would be the cost of the Highly Skilled Professional (HSP)?

A: The costs of the HSP would be shared between the department and the district. The percentage and the basis of the costs will be included in the legislation.

Q48: Will the cost of HSPs be included in the administrative cost calculation?

A: These costs will not be included in the district administrative costs.

Q49: Can the districts be involved in the selection of Highly Skilled Professionals?

A: Yes. Districts will be involved with the selection of an HSP; however, the department will oversee the development of a pool of potential resources. Technical assistance can be delivered to the district by department personnel, consultants, colleges/universities personnel, other district personnel, and HSPs.

Q50: Who would appoint new local school board members?

A: Currently, NJQSAC legislation permits the Commissioner to appoint non-voting board members to low-performance school districts that need partial or full intervention.

Q51: Is the Highly Skilled Professional (HSP) a team or individual(s) and what is the role of that person or persons?

A: The HSP will provide oversight of the implementation activities identified in the NJQSAC district improvement plan in low-performance districts. The HSP will not become a fixed entity in the districts. He or she will only assist the district as needed or as assigned.

Q52: Will the HSP be reporting to the school district superintendent or the department?

A: The HSP will report to the Commissioner.

Q53: Will there be guidance forthcoming to assist business administrators in determining where the cost for the HSP should appear in the budget?

A: Yes. This guidance will be included in the *NJQSAC Procedures Review Manual*.

Q54 If a district's score is within the acceptable range, however the district feels there is a need for an HSP, can one be requested?

A: Yes. A district can always request assistance from the department or from an HSP.

#### NJQSAC District Improvement Plan

Q55: Will districts be required to submit performance objectives as they currently do?

A: No. Moderate and low-performance districts will be required to develop an NJQSAC District Improvement Plan. The NJQSAC District Improvement Plan will include strategies which will improve district effectiveness. If the district is designated as high-performance, the district will not be required to submit a district improvement plan.